



Louis Malle: An Interview from "The Lovers to Pretty Baby"

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Louis Malle

an interview

from *The Lovers* to *Pretty Baby*

"Behind reality there's something else, and we're looking for it."

Auteurist film critics have sometimes given less than wholehearted approval to the *oeuvre* of Louis Malle, disregarding the stylistic and thematic consistency manifested in his films for over twenty years. His rebellion against the tyranny of genre and convention created the impression that each of his films was a new departure that failed to fit into convenient molds. Each Malle film is indeed a new departure—his innovative questioning of the medium rivals that of Buñuel—and his work is much larger than the sum of its parts.

Unlike directors like Polanski or Forman who adjusted their considerable talents to the American system to produce successful if less personal films, Malle in his first American project, *Pretty Baby*, chose to adjust the system to his own creative genius while continuing to explore his life-long interest in youth and the process of growing up. He has taken an enormous risk with *Pretty Baby*, as he also did in *Murmur of the Heart*. Not only does it deal with a child prostitute and her relationship with an older man, a subject bound to inflame the rage of many, but it is also his most restrained and understated film to date, which may baffle the popcorn addict.

With charm that is never facile and tenderness untainted by sentimentality, Malle examines his adolescent characters before they lose their last vestige of magic, that wondrous look at the world that they can no longer cast as adults. Instead of yearning to recapture the bliss of a paradise lost, he embarks upon a penetrating search for "a moment of truth, *the* moment of truth in our

lives." This moment involves exposure to the absurd and corrupt world of adults . . .

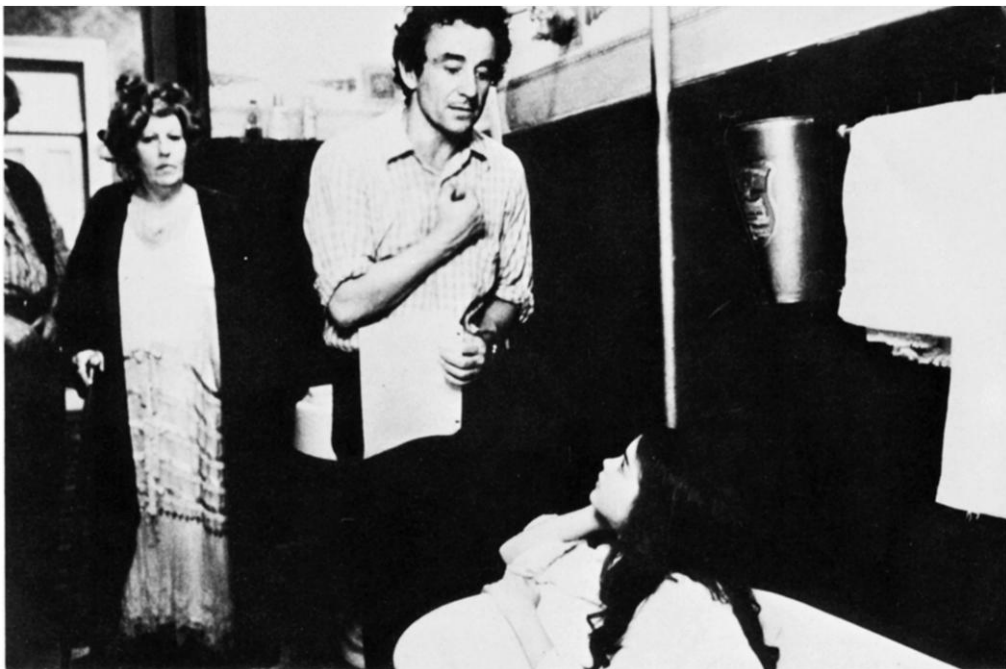
Why your fascination with adolescence and the ritual of entering the adult world?

I'm fascinated by it through my own experience and what I feel about what's going on today. For most of us, when we are about to become adults and live by the rules of the adult world, we have to leave behind a lot of the freedom, and fantasy, and looseness. There's always a moment when you find out that those rules are not necessarily right.

In previous stages of our civilization—before the industrial society, especially in the twentieth century where things are going so fast: in twenty years, the world has changed more than during five centuries in the Middle Ages, so society is much less stable—in periods of very slow change, children were almost provided with a moment to experiment. In the Middle Ages or the Renaissance—actually up to the twentieth century—most of the time, if you were the son of a peasant, you would become a peasant yourself, following your father. Artisans would go on tours around the country and learn their trade: society seemed to find it necessary to provide a moment for adolescents to experiment, before they return to society as members. Today the cut is much more abrupt and traumatic.

To me, personally, the period of adolescence—between the ages 12 and 15—has been absolutely crucial. There were two central events in my youth—and in my life. One was the war. In 1944, I was 11. A lot of traumatic things happened to me and I remember it much more vividly than I remember the rest of the forties and even the fifties. I remember the first six months of 1944

Louis
Malle
directing
Brooks
Shields
in
PRETTY
BABY



practically day by day.

Then I had this heart murmur, so I was taken out of school and had to stay home and work on my own. That's when I started being very much alone, reading a lot—and lots of things happened to me in that period. It was very difficult, because I was supposed to be sick and I didn't know what would become of me—I was not supposed to do any physical activity. I was very sheltered and I started looking around me. This accident must have accentuated my curiosity. In fact, even in my very first film, I managed to inject in the story a very young couple—the girl was 16 and the boy 17: he was Georges Poujouly of *Forbidden Games*.

How important to you is the notion of innocence of children and its loss?

I'm not really sure that children are innocent. From a very early age, practically from birth, they're exposed to a lot of information. If you oppose innocence to a sense of guilt, there's no question that children in our society are tremendously exposed to guilt. It's almost imprinted by their education. When you're a child, you tend to rely much more on first-hand experience, which is acquired through your senses—seeing, touching, smelling. That's what's so great about it. But when you become 13 or 14, education becomes very abstract and you're supposed to get your experience and information from books, which is

second-hand: through someone else's experience. This is definitely wrong—it cuts you off from the world, from nature.

I was thinking of innocence as expressed in Skolimowski's Deep End: a boy discovers the world for the first time by finding sex and then the only thing that can follow is death—everything else would be an anticlimax.

Sex is a terribly important part of growing up. It's obvious. Usually, adults have a tendency to consider children as sexless, which makes it a lot easier for the adults, but we know it's not true. What you find out when you become an adult is

Malle's MURMUR OF THE HEART confronted another taboo: incest.



corruption—here innocence can be opposed to corruption—and corruption is the importance of money, of social structures, the inability to achieve what one wants and the fact that, for all these reasons, every adult has a double language. You have to compromise all the time, say things you don't really mean, dealing with the obvious hypocrisy in which we live—it's part of the art of living.

This is what Zazie finds out: everything is deceptive and corrupt.

Zazie is in many ways a perfect archetype, because it was almost classical in its structure: a little girl coming to the big city, Paris, from the country, for 36 hours and then she goes back. And what happens to her is discovering that not only the world of adults but also modern civilization, the Big City . . . she discovers that everybody is lying, everybody is pretending—they're not what they seem to be. It's part of the game, in comedy, to have people change physical appearances. Zazie exposed exactly what I've been trying to do since, but it's very much in the open because in the book it was like that—this man, Gabriel, was changing identity every two reels, appearing in a different costume . . . His wife was a woman who was also a man, and everybody was upside down. I even managed to shoot scenes where in the same dolly shot we would change objects: a chair was red and the next time the camera passed by it, it was blue. I made it obvious in a very aggressive way that we live in a world which, we pretend, is one, but instead is multiple and changing—and we try to deal with that contradiction.

If you're a child, you want the Truth. And we know—and that's the knowledge that takes years

to accept—that there's no such thing. It's a matter of consensus: an accepted truth in one society will not be accepted in another. I'm very sensitive to this aspect of living. There's always a moment when you find out that your parents are lying to you—and they all do, even if they try not to. It's the main shock that starts you off.

You have said that Black Moon was born out of the last ten minutes of Lacombe, Lucien. In what way? Did Pretty Baby originate out of Black Moon? In Black Moon a daughter breast-feeds her mother, which is also the motif that ends the film. Pretty Baby opens with a girl watching her mother give birth.

What I meant to say about the end of *Lacombe, Lucien*, is that I had the idea of *Black Moon* around the figure of Thérèse Giehse who plays the Jewish grandmother in *Lacombe* and is the central character, a sort of Mother Earth, in *Black Moon*. The idea struck me when we shot the end of *Lacombe*, which we shot in sequence. Those three characters lost in the wilderness, with time dissolving—a pause when everything stops and time ceases to be important—a suspended moment. Visually and emotionally, *Black Moon* is a prolongation of the last ten minutes of *Lacombe*, which were a break from the rest of the picture. The fact that they were finally losing themselves is different: it was not really necessary but I felt I needed it.

Black Moon starts more or less where *Lacombe* stops because, after all, we could very well imagine at the end of *Lacombe* that they find a big house, where there's an old lady in a bed . . . It was the same archaic landscape. We shot it practically in the same place.

There is also something between *Black Moon* and *Pretty Baby*. In *Black Moon*, I try to make the point—symbolically—about the little girl who is sort of becoming a mother for the mother. In *Pretty Baby*, the relationship between Hattie and Violet is very much a reversal of roles.

What was the function of the role reversals in Black Moon?

It was, again, about identities which aren't really clear: people changing physical appearances. They were inside and outside their bodies all the time. And you have this strange couple, who are supposedly brother and sister, but at some point she's more masculine and he more feminine.

ZAZIE DANS LE METRO





BLACK MOON [Cathryn Harrison]

Consciously or unconsciously, I'm trying to express this fundamental doubt that I have about people actually being what they pretend to be. I show people always searching for something else and sometimes being very unhappy with what they are—this search of identity which seems to be one of the traumas of this society. It was a lot easier to be yourself in a very rigid society like the Indian caste system, where everything—from the moment you were born—was decided for you. You were part of the universe, playing a very specific role vis-à-vis society, your family . . . All your life was extremely predictable. Today, we're in a much looser society, where people are more in charge of their individual destiny and it's a source of extreme confusion and disorder, because psychologically many of them cannot assume their identity and pretend to be something else.

In Pretty Baby, the theme of reality versus appearance is also very strong: apart from the brothel being a factory of illusions, the illusion merchants themselves fall prey to what they manufacture: Hattie believes the earrings she gets from "Highpockets" are hers to keep; the German prostitute tries to lure the old man into marrying her so she could get out—but he never marries her.

The whorehouse is a sort of microcosm of the real world, but a caricature of it, a crude and open reflection of the real world. Politically, the power structure is very much like in our society, where money is essential. It's all about money and men are definitely on top of women—it's all about the exploitation of women. When somebody is rich and powerful, he can do practically what he wants and is provided with everything he wants as long as he can pay for it. And the gigantic hypocrisy when you have an official red-light district, frequented by politicians—and it's completely accepted . . .

The audience also falls prey to illusion. In the opening scene, we see the exterior of the brothel at night—but the rest of the film takes place indoors, so it's always lit, even at night. Another example, when Violet sees her mother give birth, at first she sighs as if she were having sex, then groans in pain, and finally we find out she's really giving birth.

The opening scene is something I had in mind from the very beginning. I practically started with the birth scene, which was taken from the Al Rose book: about one of the whores giving birth in the attic in the middle of the night, while the "action" is going on downstairs . . . So, I thought that if I had this first scene, starting with a close-up of the little girl watching very attentively and you don't know what's going on, you may think the suffering and the screaming and moaning that comes with birth is very close to the sounds of orgasm. This confusion was deliberately provoked and it's a good start for the story: this confusion between the process of life and sexual activity.

Photography is an illusion too: Hattie is made to look "like an angel," which she wasn't. Bellocq himself says he's dealing with magic.

The whole context of the film is an illusion. I took advantage of the fact that it was taking

place in New Orleans, where voodoo is so important. They live in a strange world and believe in a lot of irrational things. And of course, Bellocq, "the artist," is a man who is trying to track down an illusion. Photography is an illusion, filmmaking is an illusion . . . I felt extremely close to the character of Bellocq—I very much identified with him and when I directed Keith, I deliberately made him behave like a movie director. In the photography session in Hattie's room, when he tells her those stupid things: "You're beautiful! Perfect! Don't move! It's going to be great!"

This scene has heavy sexual overtones. Bellocq tells Violet to leave the room and then asks Hattie: "Are you ready for me?"

It was meant to be the transposition of a sexual dream, where actual sex is replaced by . . . Definitely, for Bellocq, his art is a means to get rid of an obsession which has to do with sexual fantasy. It's an obvious transposition of sex into something else, which supposedly creativity is all about.

The only instance where appearance becomes reality is Hattie's marriage. She also keeps her promise to Violet to claim her back. Why do you give her this opportunity that you deny the others—nobody else really leaves prostitution. You even said that Violet would probably leave home and, who knows, might even return to the old profession. Why is Hattie so lucky? Or maybe it's a technicality—to leave Violet on her own?

It's a technicality, but at the same time I tried to make the Hattie character so obsessed with the idea of leaving the whorehouse and becoming respectable—she's been trying for years, and when she finally succeeds, the madam says: "Well, you finally nailed one, huh?" Everyone else wants to do so too but she is maybe more dedicated to the goal . . .

I took it for granted, because it was in the original story—in the Al Rose book: Violet met one of the johns that eventually became her husband, and from that time on she led a respectable life. So, for me, it was a part of the story from the beginning, only I transferred it to the mother.

I had a few things in mind from the very beginning: Bellocq, the birth scene, the scenes with the child in the middle of the whorehouse, the fact that at some point the mother would go . . . I considered the possibility that Hattie is thrown out of the house and starts working in a lower



PRETTY BABY: "I felt extremely close to the figure of Bellocq . . ."

part of Storyville, as a lower-class prostitute, but I dropped it.

Why does Violet single out the "Professor" (the pianist) and then Bellocq to share looks of complicity with? Is it because they're all outsiders, observers rather than participants?

Yes, because if you're Violet who is raised in a whorehouse and knows very little about the world outside . . . Her experience of the world comes from what she sees in the house. She sees men who are like objects—she has no relationship with them because they come for something very precise, they're completely anonymous. The johns, the customers, don't really exist. So, Violet is left with the men in the house with whom she can have a relationship—the two outsiders: the piano player who is black, as most of them were, who is very lucid, watching the scene with a lot of irony—his presence itself is a comment. During the auction scene, there is a very long shot of him and you can imagine all kinds of things going through his mind.

Bellocq is also an outsider and is the one man the girls can relate to because he's different—he's not looking for sex, he's not a john, and he becomes a friend: he's a human being, not someone who's going to "lie on top of you," as one of the girls says.

The theme of observer and participant brings us back to Black Moon—Cathryn Harrison is an observer, and so is Zazie.

Oh yes, the character of Cathryn in *Black Moon* is an observer. It's a bit strange: she's watching her own dream, her own illusion. You could easily say it's a world created by her, a daydream she's inventing—watching her own fantasy. But she's drifting . . .

It has always been essential to me to have the central character as an observer of a situation, whatever the situation may be. Violet—in *Pretty Baby* we see what's going on through Violet's eyes. I even asked Paramount to state it in the advertising campaign: "a world seen through a child's eyes."

Black Moon shares with Rivette's Céline et Julie Vont en Bateau references to Lewis Carroll, especially to Alice in Wonderland. What interests you in Lewis Carroll?

This obsession with children, with girls, which is totally sublimated, totally transposed—God knows they've been trying to find all kinds of sexual perversions in Lewis Carroll but they don't seem to be able to dig out anything really serious. Technically, it was sort of a-sexual and it seems that just talking to girls, taking them for boat trips or photographing them was enough to satisfy his fantasy. It's very mysterious. There's something opaque about him. This sort of double-life he led: being a very respectable clergyman on the one hand and a mathematician and teacher on the other—his odd relationships with girls, how he dealt with their parents . . . It's very Victorian, very proper: asking the parents' permission to photograph the girls naked . . . and being so prudent and careful about the whole thing! The result is similar to Bellocq's photographs—it's stunning how he managed to capture . . . Some of these Lewis Carroll photographs are very erotic, because they convey a very strong obsession.

Some people see Alice as the beginning of the Comedy of the Absurd. Does it interest you in this sense? Zazie can be related to that.

Yes, many times I was tempted to deal with *Alice* in a more obvious way than I had done. The discovery of Lewis Carroll, when I was very young, was very important to me and I've certainly been influenced by him, but I don't think I'll do justice to my interest in him and to his writing just by filming one of his books. There's a very interesting one called *Sylvie and Bruno*. It's a world which is totally double-faced. There are several levels: the real, the dream-world of these children, and how they invent the people surrounding them in a completely different way. I'm very turned on by this way of looking at the world—that behind reality there's something else, and we're looking for it.

In Zazie, Black Moon and Pretty Baby, the girls are constantly associated with animals. Why?

It probably has to do with my own interest in the animal world. It also seems to me children are a lot closer to animals. In the last two centuries, we've managed to isolate ourselves from the animal world, from nature. We've not only cut ourselves from it, but also destroyed it. The more powerful we become technologically, the more we destroy. If things go on at this rate, there'll be nothing left on earth except humans. If there's a Capital Sin, this must be it.

Why did you use the unicorn in Black Moon?

What's so interesting about the myth of the unicorn is that it can be found in almost every culture. So, it must have something very strong about it, it must correspond to a need. It's a fabulous animal and lots of times it was taken for real. In *Black Moon*, she expresses wisdom. She's supposed to be the equivalent of the old lady—her alter-ego, the same person in a different body. Also, in the part of France where I live, which is a very archaic landscape, very wild and untouched—it seems that a unicorn could . . . She's almost the same color as the landscape, a part of it, so it almost seemed natural that she would appear. When I was writing *Lacombe, Lucien*, I found out there was a local legend about a unicorn kidnapping local girls and raping them. It goes back to the collective unconscious . . . I felt obliged to use the unicorn—I had no choice . . .

In three key scenes in Pretty Baby, Bellocq is seen through glass: when he arrives at the brothel, when he leaves it, and when Violet goes to his

LACOMBE, LUCIEN



house and sees him through the glass door. Is it to bring about a distanciation effect, to leave him a mystery, a reflection that corresponds to the lens of his camera?

In these moments, he's seen by Violet. It's her point of view. The fact that it's through windows or mirrors makes it almost a creation of hers . . . We don't really see him; we see him in the eyes of.

There's a big difference between *Pretty Baby* and *Black Moon* in that *Pretty Baby* pretends to be a realistic picture: every rational explanation is provided for what's going on, which is not the case with *Black Moon*. But finally it comes back to the same thing: the world of illusion, as you say, the fact that it's seen from a child's eye makes it even more . . . We could discuss for hours the subjectivity of her regard on things.

You mentioned mirrors. In Pretty Baby, the German prostitute looks at herself in the mirror as she talks about the old man—and we see her reflection. Except for Violet's make-up session in front of the mirror, there's another scene toward the end where the "Professor" examines himself in the mirror but we don't see the mirror. Why don't you show it?

I try not to work that way. The more I go on, the more I try to let things happen. It's not something that came out of a reflection—a reflection about a reflection . . . I feel increasingly free to let things take their course and I like to be surprised by the way I shoot a scene. When I'm editing, I see the same scene 200 times and I have a lot of time to think about how I did it. Sometimes I surprise myself: I realize I could have done it in an entirely different way, so why did I do it this way? Sometimes I have an explanation and sometimes I don't.

That's what I said about shooting a documentary: if you put your camera in the street, the way you film is an interpretation. So, it's your point of view, it's a mirror game—and it's terribly unconscious, partly because you shoot it very quickly and only later do you try to understand why. I try to do it in fiction too now, as much as I can. I try to invent a world, I put my camera in front of it, and then I try to shoot it the way I'd shoot a documentary. There's less and less of a difference between documentary and fiction in that scene.

Except in terms of subject matter. You didn't make a documentary about growing up, for example.

I have a son who is six years old now and for the first three years of his life, I've been filming him constantly. I must tell you, I got to a point where it became difficult. It takes a lot of discipline to do that, so I stopped. But I have piles of 16mm which eventually could be an interesting little documentary. It would be terribly interesting to keep doing it for 15 years. I've always wanted to do it, and I'm probably going to: since I have two children now, it's a lot easier . . .

It's interesting to examine Pretty Baby through camera movement. It opens with a very slow zoom to the brothel, followed by an almost identical zoom to Violet. There is another zoom toward the whores laughing in the corridor during the game of "sardines." At the breakfast table, at the end, the camera pulls back, taking a distance from Violet and Bellocq.

The first zoom was, of course, on a miniature. I found out in Paris that some crazy jazz musicians spent 15 years of their lives rebuilding New Orleans in a huge room, so we used it. I tried to give the impression of a bird's view of Storyville, getting closer and closer to what is supposed to be Basin Street. Then, when we get inside, we get closer to Violet with a very slow, almost unnoticed, zoom—when she watches the birth: it's a prolongation of the previous shot. I thought it was a good balance.

The breakfast scene is a good one. I used it to show the routine of their life together. It starts with a very irritating moment when she puts a lot of butter on her toast and then we pull back and discover Bellocq watching her, and then we pull more and see the maid coming in. It's all in one shot. It's a movement which actually replaces a series of shots. The close up starts almost like an insert, and then you have the entire setting slowly revealed. There was a break in the story—a few months have passed since the picnic scene, since the marriage—and I felt this device also helped indicate the passage of time.

There's a scene where the madam, Nell, washes her feet and a little girl watches and fiddles with her own feet as she will later fiddle with Bellocq's shoelaces. It is very striking visually though of no visible service to the story.

I thought it would be interesting to establish the presence of the little girl, who is another Violet. From the very beginning, she's initiated into the adult world, and this crazy old woman

washing her feet in hot water . . . I did it insidiously, as I usually try to make my camerawork: there was no separate shot. It was in the movement of the men who bring in the huge piece of meat and they enter the kitchen, which is when I pan down and discover the old woman wiping her feet with the little girl watching her. It's all part of the same movement, and the pan is almost unnoticed. All these details are significant but they aren't taken out to be made into something very obvious. If I were to define the way I approach a camera movement, I'd say it's very insidious. My camera movements are not meant to be noticed—they're very much improvised and I try to be as unconscious as possible with the use of the camera.

You mentioned a few images that became the starting point of Pretty Baby. How about Zazie and Black Moon?

Black Moon was definitely the old lady in bed—in my bed, in my house . . . It was a fantasy about a woman being almost immortal and ruling the world from this bed, communicating via a weird radio system. That was the starting point. And also the old convention of the fairy tale: the little girl walking alone in that landscape and entering the empty house. It was a mixture of these two images.

Zazie for me was this tiny little girl in the middle of the Parisian traffic, looking around and getting in trouble with every possible adult—just her presence was disturbing.

What is the relationship between Black Moon and Phantom India?

It's very unconscious. I found out later that the whole idea of *Black Moon*—the idea that the world doesn't exist, that reality is a dream—the whole philosophical outlook of the film is very Indian. It's more precise in the sense that I used this engraving as a sort of leitmotif in the story—there's a vulture, a weeping woman and a man cutting the vulture's head. And it becomes reality at the point where Joe Dallessandro starts killing the vulture. It's as if it came out of the engraving. The film is completely structured like a myth, and it's a direct reference to the Ramayana.

What major literary influences do you acknowledge?

Many different ones. I've been under the spell of Montaigne when I was young. I was very im-

pressed by Proust. Recently, I've been interested in Indian literature—the *Bhagavad Gita*. I would certainly mention Lewis Carroll.

Could you attach a book to each of your films, in terms of time?

Not really, no. The situation in *The Lovers* was taken from a nineteenth-century short story, *Point de Lendemain*, by Vivant Denon, an obscure writer who was a contemporary of Choderlos de Laclos, to whom he is sometimes compared. In those days I was very much in line with Montaigne and eighteenth-century writers like Marivaux. There's certainly something of Marivaux in *The Lovers*. He is a much more important writer than is usually acknowledged.

Just by shooting *The Fire Within*, I expressed my interest in Drieu la Rochelle, whose inner contradictions always fascinated me.

Recently I've been freer from literature, I think . . .

You have revolutionized film music. Using Miles Davis in Elevator to the Gallows was completely new. You used Satie in The Fire Within while using no music at all in The Thief of Paris. How do you see the use of the sound track? Do you see it as an additional layer of meaning, supplementary or contradictory to what goes on the screen?

I try to use it in many opposite directions. I think it's just as important as the image, if not more so. The problem with the sound track is that it involves a contradiction. On the one hand, sound is a lot more abstract than sight. Music is an art form which naturally escapes reality. The great thing about the sound track is that you can add things, while the camera is a very stupid instrument: it films what you put in front of it. Of course, you can do a lot of things with the light, and you can change a little in printing, but it's very limited. On the other hand, the main purpose of the sound track is to bring you the dialogue, which is where the theater, psychology, the "message" and everything that is heavy in film come in. In most films, the sound track is merely dialogues with music, which is nothing but pleonasm—accentuating the atmosphere or the situation, usually "psychological" music. This is uninteresting. But there is a lot to invent in the sound track. For years, film was enslaved to sound. When the sound film appeared, the great thing was to hear what the actors said, and to get away from that has already taken 40 years. And

it's going to take a lot more.

I put less and less dialogues in my films: I'm a bit reluctant about dialogues, and I don't really trust them to convey what I want. I try to be more ambiguous and more complex than dialogues can express. You could say more with a bell ringing and with an effect that you add to the sound track during sound editing—and I spend much time on it—than by the dialogue.

I try to use music the way visuals are used, as part of the scene. In *Pretty Baby*, jazz was a part of the scene—the beginning of jazz. It was a part of daily life, but I used it very discreetly because I didn't feel the picture needed a score. Sometimes I use music as a comment, and at other times as a counterpoint: against the mood. In *Pretty Baby*, I took advantage of this great music that I love. In the picnic, there's that New Orleans combo playing "After the Fall," a very famous song of the time, and it's very much in the spirit of the scene, but it wasn't written for it. I'd say it's used more as a comment in *Pretty Baby*.

It's different in the case of *Elevator to the Gallows*. It was my first film and I was completely in love with the music of Miles Davis. It's a very interesting film, but I find some moments almost embarrassing. Miles Davis made it into something better than it actually was. It gave the picture a style, a tempo and a climax that it didn't have. It's practically the only time . . . Yes, the other exception would be the use of the Brahms Sextet in *The Lovers*. It's used in a conventional way

because it brings a romantic mood into the love scene in that long, slow night shared by Jeanne Moreau and Jean-Marc Bory. It was beautiful but its use was almost manipulative. It was certainly trying to convey certain emotions.

The use of Satie in *The Fire Within* was much more discreet, more like a counter-point. These little piano pieces create a very melancholic atmosphere but, at the same time, there's definitely something ironical about it. It was a sort of distanciation from what was going on on the screen.

When I've been successful in using music in my films, it's always been music that I've been listening to while writing the script or shooting the film. So naturally, it entered the picture and became part of its structure. I always use music that I'm very familiar with and that corresponds to my mood, because I take for granted that my mood is in my films. I was very much into the *Gymnopedie* and *Gnocienne* by Satie that I used in *The Fire Within*. Same thing with the Brahms Sextet.

If I used Wagner in *Black Moon*, it's because I became interested in him fairly recently. I used to be very much against his music because of my family background—my grandfather was almost a Wagner scholar. I used to think his music was boring. But I listened to a lot of Wagner when I wrote the script of *Black Moon*, so it entered the picture.

Can a film be structured musically?

Yes, but audiences don't like it. I think *Black Moon* was structured musically: there are a number of musical figures that I use in the script, like the principle of recurrence which has a contrapuntal value—you expose a theme and then return to it. The way the themes are exposed and re-exposed in different ways, the way they are repeated or reversed, the use of leitmotifs—how the same sound, image or movement come back.

It has not been very well received, I guess because they're not used to it. When they listen to music, I suppose they close their eyes and concentrate. When you're listening to a fugue, you're capable of following more or less what the composer intended, but in film they still want to follow the plot—which is more related to the theater than to anything else, in terms of dramatic rules. It's difficult to offer something different.

